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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3476
INFO RUEHOO/CHINA POSTS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 6964
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL PRIORITY 3030
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA PRIORITY 1034
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA PRIORITY 3474
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE PRIORITY 4586
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TOKYO 002104

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SUBJECT: PM ABE,S YASUKUNI SHRINE DONATION

REF: TOKYO 04229

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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Joseph R. Donovan for reasons 1.4 (b, d).

11. (C) Summary: Prime Minister Abe and the Japanese government are refusing to publicly confirm or deny reports that the Prime Minister made a 50,000 yen contribution to Yasukuni Shrine. Abe, according to an Embassy Tokyo MOFA contact, paid for the offering from personal funds, but added the title "prime minister" when signing his name. The reaction from China has been much less critical than that from Seoul. Separately, members of the Japan War-Bereaved Association have begun discussions on "removing" the 14 class-A war criminals from the shrine. Efforts to remove them are strongly opposed by some Association members, including Yuko Tojo, the granddaughter of Hideko Tojo. End summary.

Abe Avoids Confirming Yasukuni Shrine Donation

12. (C) Prime Minister Abe recently made a 50,000 yen (\$417) financial contribution to Yasukuni Shrine in honor of the shrine's April 21-23 spring festival as an "offering of gratitude," MOFA China Division Principal Deputy Director Endo told Embassy Tokyo on May 8. Abe designated that the money to be used to purchase a potted sakaki tree, used in Shinto religious ceremonies. Abe paid for the offering from personal funds, but added the title "prime minister" when signing his name. During a press conference on May 8, Abe would not comment on whether he sent the offering, explaining that, "matters related to Yasukuni Shrine have become diplomatic issues." Abe continued to neither confirm nor deny whether he will visit the shrine.

13. (SBU) Chief Cabinet Secretary Shiozaki during a May 8 press conference noted that Abe made the offering in a "private capacity," and therefore the Japanese Government would have no comment. Separately, Foreign Minister Taro Aso told the press Abe's actions were unlikely to impact relations with China and South Korea. LDP Secretary-General Nakagawa agreed, telling the press on May 8 that no major diplomatic consequences would result from Abe's offering. Opposition party leaders, however, are seizing on the opportunity to criticize Abe and will likely grill him in the Diet over his donation. DPJ Secretary-General Hatoyama told the press that if Abe wanted to visit the shrine, he should have done so openly in person, rather than sending an

offering signed using his official title.

China Responding Cautiously to Shrine Donation

14. (C) China's reaction has been low key thus far. Chinese Foreign Minister Jiang Yu, during a May 8 press conference, noted that the shrine issue is an important and sensitive political issue in Sino-Japan relations and added that China and Japan have already agreed to promote a friendly relationship. MOFA's Endo emphasized to an Embassy Tokyo officer on May 9 that China has refrained from directly criticizing Abe about the donation and has not contacted MOFA over the offering. In Seoul, a South Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade official said in a May 8 press release that Abe's offering was "very regrettable" and called on Japan to adopt a "correct perception of history." Media reaction in Beijing was, similarly, less critical than that from Seoul.

To Remove or Note to Remove -- That is the Question

15. (C) The Japan War-Bereaved Association, headed by senior Diet member and former LDP Secretary-General Makoto Koga, held its first study session on the enshrinement of the 14 class-A war criminals at Yasukuni on May 8, according to the press. When contacted by the Embassy, one of Koga's staffers explained that the main objective of the study sessions is to discuss the possibility of dis-enshrining the class-A war criminals, although the group does not plan to produce a report or recommendations. Rather, the discussions at this point are intended to allow senior members of the Association to sort out their thinking on the subject. The group will meet again in September.

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16. (C) Some, but not all, relatives of the 14 class-A war criminals strongly oppose any move to dis-enshrine. The most vocal of them is Yuko Tojo, the 67 year-old granddaughter of Hideko Tojo, who on May 8 announced her intention to run as an independent in the Tokyo constituency in the July upper house election. Her primary stated objective in running is to advocate for retaining the 14 in Yasukuni. Other relatives of the 14 favor, or at least do not oppose, removing them from the shrine. Arguments to remove them were bolstered by recent revelations in diaries of two close advisors to the late Emperor Hirohito describing Hirohito's anger over the 1978 decision to enshrine the class-A group and his refusal to visit Yasukuni as long as they remain enshrined. The release of the diaries and the revelation that Emperor Hirohito opposed enshrining the 14, could trigger a reappraisal of the issue and an eventual removal of the class-A war criminals from Yasukuni's "list of enshrined souls" (goshi meibo).

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